

Message Text

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SUBJ: ELECTRONIC DIALOGUE WITH AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

REF: HONG KONG 13223

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STATE PLEASE PASS AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY

1. THE PRE-RECORDED SPECIAL VIDEOCASSETTE CONVERSATION AND SMOOTHLY ARTICULATED, AUTHORITATIVE RESPONSES BY AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY DURING THE TWO-WAY TRANSPACIFIC Q AND A SESSION MADE A DEEP AND POSITIVE IMPRESSION UPON THE SEVENTY-ODD FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS' CLUB MEMBERS GATHERED FOR THE OCCASION. ONE EXPERIENCED AND NORMALLY HARD-BOILED CORRESPONDENT MEMBER AVERRED, AT THE END OF THE SESSION, THAT HE WOULD REMEMBER THE EVENT FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE. IN BRIEF, THE REACTION WAS ENTHUSIASTIC IN ALL RESPECTS.

2. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF ABOUT FOUR MINUTES OF RECEPTION DIFFICULTY AT THE HONG KONG END(WHICH HEIGHTENED THE DRAMATIC IMPACT), TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENTS WORKED VERY SMOOTHLY. THE VIDEOCASSETTE WAS SUPERBLY PRODUCED, AND IN ITS PROJECTION ON 40 INCH SCREEN, GAVE A LIVE QUALITY, ENHANCED FURTHER BY A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO THE TWO-WAY AUDIO DIALOGUE. THE LINK-UP WITH THE UNITED STATES WAS HANDLED IN THE CLUB BY A TEAM OF RADIO HONG KONG ENGINEERS, ASSIGNED BY THEIR DIRECTOR BECAUSE, IN HIS WORDS, HE "WANTED TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH AN OUTSTANDING AND HISTORIC EVENT."

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3. MR. MCCLOSKEY'S ANSWERS TO THE TWELVE SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

AND HIS HANDLING OF RAY KABAHER'S WELL THOUGHT-OUT TOPICAL QUERIES PROVIDED A CLEAR ARTICULATION OF U.S. POLICY ON A NUMBER OF MAJOR CURRENT ISSUES. AS THE PROGRAM PROCEEDED, THERE WAS HEAVY NOTE-TAKING AND KEEN INTEREST IN EVIDENCE ON THE PART OF CORRESPONDENTS WHO RANK AMONG THE REGION'S MOST EXPERIENCED.

4. LOCAL MEDIA COVERAGE ACCORDED THE ELECTRONIC DIALOGUE INCLUDED REPORTS IN THE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST AND FIVE CHINESE LANGUAGE DAILIES. THE LATER FOCUSED ON REMARKS RE ROC AND IMPENDING FORD VISIT TO PEKING IN 1975. SING TAO DAILY, 180,000 CIRCULATION, GAVE THE DIALOGUE TOP FRONT PAGE PLAY. ON TELEVISION, HK-TVB GAVE FEATURED BILLING TO NEWSFILM COVERAGE OF THE EVENT IN ITS NIGHTLY NEWS ROUDUP, SHORTLY AFTER IT TOOK PLACE.

5. MANY CORRESPONDENTS WENT OUT OF THEIR WAY TO COMMENT TO USIS OFFICERS THAT THE ELECTRONIC DIALOGUE WAS A MOST IMAGINATIVE TECHNIQUE FOR BRINGING JOURNALISTS HERE IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH HIGH U.S. OFFICIALS IN THE UNITED STATES.

6. THIS POST WANTS TO EXPRESS ITS WHOLEHEARTED APPRECIATION TO AMBASSADOR MCCLOSKEY AS WELL AS RAY KABAHER FOR AN UNUSUALLY EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE. NATURALLY, WE INCLUDE THE STATE AND USIA STAFFERS WHO BACKSTOPPED THE PROGRAM AT THE WASHINGTON END. IZENBERG

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